

Mono County Collaborative Planning Team

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MINUTES

May 29, 2003
(Adopted June 26, 2003)

Members Present: Chair Mary Pipersky, Mono Supervisors; Bill Dunkelberger, BLM; Cindi Mitton, Lahontan RWQCB; Kathy Lucich, USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe; Jeff Bailey, USFS/Inyo; John Eastman, Mammoth Lakes Town Council; Katy Walton, Caltrans

Members Absent: Sandy Hogan, USFS/Inyo; Joseph Saulque, Benton Paiute Reservation; Chris Plakos, LADWP; Art Sam, Bridgeport Indian Colony; Denyse Racine, DFG

Staff Present: Greg Newbry, Jeff Irons, Dan Lyster, Gwen Plummer, C.D. Ritter

Guests Present: Sally Miller, The Wilderness Society; Amy Horne and Mary Canada, Sierra Business Council; Wendi Grasseschi, Eric Wilmanns and John Moynier, MCWD; George Shirk, *Mammoth Monthly* magazine; Dale Schmidt, LADWP

1. **CALL TO ORDER & FLAG SALUTE:** Chair Mary Pipersky called the meeting to order at 9:13 a.m., and C.D. Ritter led the flag salute.
2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:**
Mary Canada, Sierra Business Council: SBC's annual conference Sept. 25-27 at the Mammoth Mountain Inn will feature keynote speaker Hal Clifford, author of the controversial book "Downhill Slide." Clifford will also serve on a panel comprised of people with diverse opinions.
3. **MINUTES:** Review minutes of March 27 and April 24, 2003: The minutes of March 27 were adopted as submitted (Eastman/Dunkelberger. Ayes: 4-0. Abstain due to absence: Lucich, Bailey, Mitton). The minutes of April 24 were continued to the next meeting.
4. **AGENCY ROUNDTABLE:** Members provided updates on agency planning issues and upcoming projects.
5. **"INVESTING FOR PROSPERITY"**
Dr. Amy Horne, Sierra Business Council research director

The Sierra Business Council is comprised of 600 members in 23 counties, with regional headquarters in Truckee. The group has served as a model throughout the country and willingly shared information it has compiled. The Collaborative Planning Team actually grew out of SBC's first publication, "Planning for Prosperity." The SBC's newest publication, "Investing for Prosperity," is scheduled for release July 2. The document presents a comprehensive approach to building sustainable communities for the future.

The dynamics of Eastern Sierra communities changed when high-wage jobs in resource industries were lost, and tourism came in. Forty percent of the Mono County workforce is now in the low-wage service sector compared to 30% statewide, and Mono County is falling behind California in terms of wealth. The greatest export of the Eastern Sierra is its youth, who cannot find sustainable work or housing. Young families don't see an economic future here, and the middle class is leaving because it can't afford to maintain the lifestyle. Communities are becoming more transient, comprised of seasonal workers, second-home owners, first-time residents, and tourists. Who's going to be left long term who really cares about the place? The social structure has eroded, and the sense of community has diminished due to many absentee residents. Yet, Horne believes the Sierra Nevada offers the advantage of a rural lifestyle in compact towns while connected to engines of economic growth and innovation in nearby metropolitan areas. The Eastern Sierra communities need to create a great people climate, a place where talented people want to live, where they can realize their full potential however they see that.

The publication identifies four basic strategies of investing for prosperity: 1) Capitalize on existing assets; 2) cultivate innovation and economic diversity; 3) create long-term social capital; and 4) catalyze community partnerships. Keeping residents in the area depends on meeting baseline social needs, such as healthcare, affordable housing, quality education and a vibrant arts and culture scene. Horne suggested accentuating and capitalizing on the area's peculiar, eccentric and unique attributes. She believes the image for this area is broadening, and suggests that communities create a collective vision of what they want to become. Inyo County, for example, formulated the Inyo 2020 Forum. The challenge is to get off the rural economic boom-and-bust cycle and make this area work for permanent residents, not just tourists.

6. BRIDGEPORT VISITOR CENTER PROPOSAL

Dan Lyster & Jeff Irons, Mono County

UPDATE ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANT: Mono County started the grant process a few years ago by applying for a feasibility study grant for a visitor center in the Bridgeport area. After an initial rejection, the county submitted a grant for \$10,000 to the USFS for a Rural Communities Assistance Program. The Mono County Tourism/Film Commission agreed to conduct a marketing study. Recently, BLM met with State Parks to view potential sites for a visitor center: Green Creek Road, about ¼-mile off U.S. 395, and Travertine Hot Springs. A small residential compound/work center would be located near the site. Unlike State Parks officials, area residents prefer a location closer to Bridgeport than to Bodie.

There was discussion of a California welcome center vs. a visitor center. While the welcoming center would elevate status, employees would be required to promote the entire state, not just the local area.

The visitor center steering committee is comprised of the Bridgeport Chamber, Bridgeport Indian Colony, Caltrans, Bodie State Park, BLM, Mono County, and USFS/Humboldt-Toiyabe. Visitor center issues to be resolved include its purpose, the economic benefit to Bridgeport, and parking, especially for buses.

REACTIVATION OF SUBCOMMITTEE: The team agreed to reactivate the visitor center subcommittee.

7. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS:

WETLANDS: The two \$198,000 grants awarded to the East Walker River and Upper Owens River/Mono Basin watersheds are expected by July 1. The subcommittee will discuss its grants budget at today's meeting.

SAGE GROUSE: Dale Schmidt, LADWP, reported that the Bi-State group brought California into the planning effort. The group is considering conservation strategies for hazard management. A plan should be ready by spring 2004. Risk assessment will focus on grazing, hunting, recreation and landfill. A BLM telemetry study to figure out the key habitat has been under way since March.

LAND ADJUSTMENT: No report.

8. CPT YEAR IN REVIEW, 2002: *Continued to next meeting.*

9. SET NEXT MEETING: Thursday, June 26, 2003, at 9 a.m.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

A. "The Obsidian Trail": Caltrans

B. Draft Supplement to the Sierra Nevada Framework: USFS

10. ADJOURN: 12:05 p.m.
secretary

Respectfully submitted, C.D. Ritter, team